

1992-1996 FINDINGS
OF THE
WWII WORKING GROUP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The World War II Working Group	3
The Experience of American POWs Liberated by the Soviets, 1944-45	8
Conclusions and Future Directions	81
Ongoing Issues	3
APPENDIX I: Roles, Missions, and Definitions	85
APPENDIX II: Machine-readable Database of POWs	87
APPENDIX III: What's in a Name?	3
APPENDIX IV: Soviet Citizens In Custody of the Western Allies	92
APPENDIX V: Deceased US Servicemen in the Soviet Union	95
APPENDIX VI: List of Known U.S. Army, Navy, and Merchant Mariners Buried in the Former Soviet Union	9 6
APPENDIX VII: The Sanders List	10 5
APPENDIX VIII: The "207" List	11 8
APPENDIX IX: Case Studies	12 9

APPENDIX X: Joseph Friedl	149
APPENDIX XI: Russians Buried in Alaska	150
APPENDIX XII: The AG 704 Files	154
APPENDIX XIII: Archival Sources Examined	159

INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD WAR II WORKING GROUP

The Co-chairmen of the Joint US-Russia Commission on POW/MIAs, Ambassador Malcolm Toon and General Dmitrii Volkogonov, established the World War II Working Group in December 1994 under the Co-chairmanship of Dr. Trudy Huskamp Peterson, Acting Archivist of the United States, for the US side, and Colonel Sergei Osipov, Assistant to General Volkogonov and the Executive Secretary of the Russian side. Ambassador Toon and General Volkogonov recognized the need to discuss further World War II issues prior to the 50th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day in May 1995 and created the World War II Working Group to examine four areas of interest to the American side and one issue of great concern to the Russian side:

- Determine why and how US prisoners of war came into Soviet military custody at the end of World War II;
- Describe what happened to these POWs while in the hands of the Soviets;
- Describe the process by which the POWs returned to US military control;
- Determine whether thousands (as alleged in some accounts) or even any live American prisoners of war were not returned by the Soviets;
- Reach a final Soviet casualty accounting for World War II, including the numbers of Soviet military personnel and displaced persons who did not return to Soviet territory following the war.

The first meeting of the Working Group took place in Washington, D.C. at the 11th Plenary Session, held during December 1994. Prior to this meeting, some World War II issues had been addressed, although there had not been a specific working group for that conflict.

Dr. Peterson retired from Government service prior to the 12th Plenary Session held in August 1995. Her successor, Dr. Michael Kurtz, also of the National Archives, was unable to attend the 12th Plenary Session. He recognized that Dr. Peterson was the most logical choice to head the US World War II Working Group and invited her to represent him at the 12th Plenary Session.

In September 1995, Mr. R. Michael McReynolds of the National Archives was named the successor to Dr. Kurtz as the new commissioner representing the Archives.

Throughout these personnel changes at the top-level of the World War II Working Group, the analysts have remained the same, most notably Dr. Timothy Nenninger of the National Archives, and Mr. Danz Blasser, Lead World War II Analyst for the Defense POW/MIA Office.

Since the initial meeting of the working group, there has been one additional meeting during the 12th Plenary Session held in Moscow in August 1995 and three Technical Talk sessions held during February 1995, April 1995, and February 1996. The normal course of events during a meeting consists of the presentation of new issues, a review of outstanding issues, and then a summarization of the working group's activity in preparation of a report to the Co-chairmen of the Joint US-Russian Commission at the closing session of the Plenary.

There have been several notable bilateral achievements during the short tenure of the World War II Working Group; these include:

Sergeant Herman Kerley (US Army)

During World War II, the United States maintained a military mission at the US Embassy in Moscow. This mission was headed by Major General John Deane, USA. Part of General Deane's duties included dealing with Soviet General Filipp Ivanovich Golikov, Chief of Soviet Repatriation Affairs. Copies of Deane's correspondence with Golikov are in the records of the US Military Mission to Moscow, now at the National Archives.

While reading General Deane's correspondence, an analyst from the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO) discovered a letter to General Golikov reporting that "Staff Sergeant Herman Curley" had died on 3 February 1945, while under Soviet control near Kustrin, Germany. General Deane was requesting information about his death and burial site. Deane also sent messages to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) asking for more information on "Curley." The only information SHAEF could provide was that "Curley" had been assigned to the 9th Infantry Division.

An examination of the Master List of WWII Deceased, the records of POWs held by Germany, and of personnel records at the National Personnel Records Center for a “Staff Sergeant Herman Curley” were all negative.

During the February 1995 Technical Talks in Moscow, Colonel Osipov provided us with copies of documents from General Golikov’s files. DPMO staff, after translating and analyzing the documents, discovered a request for information from the Chief of Repatriation Affairs of the 1st Belorussian Front addressed to General Konstantin Dmitrievich Golubev, General Golikov’s deputy. This document reported that an American sergeant, “German Kerla,” and another unknown US serviceman were killed during a bombing attack. Included with this document was a diagram of the burial location at Stalag III-C, Kustrin, Germany. The diagram also indicates that these two individuals were buried in a common grave with identification tags placed in their pockets.¹

The similarity between the two names, “Herman Curley” and “German Kerla,” was striking. Additional research now produced the name Herman L. Kerley on the master list of WWII deceased, in the records of POWs held by Germany, and from the National Personnel Records Center. All three sources agreed that Kerley was in German captivity and had never been repatriated. Additionally, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) verified that Kerley’s body had never been recovered. His name is memorialized at the ABMC cemetery in the Netherlands.

Although a search for Kerley’s remains was unsuccessful in 1945, the map that we received from our Russian colleagues may assist in recovering his remains. All of this information has been forwarded to the Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI).

Missing Soviet P-40 Aircraft

Dr. Khalil Mingalievich Karimov, a veterinarian in the Magadan Oblast, contacted the staff of Defense POW/MIA Office in Moscow. Karimov has long been engaged in the reindeer breeding industry in the Magadan Oblast. His duties have involved extensive travel in the enormous Chukhchi Autonomous Okrug of Magadan Oblast.

Dr. Karimov reported that during World War II there was a well established ferry flight route to deliver US Lend-Lease airplanes from Nome, Alaska, to the Soviet Union. While working in Chukota in 1975, Dr. Karimov came upon the wreckage of an American-manufactured airplane north of Egikvinot which still contained the remains of the pilot. He gathered these remains, buried them in a shallow hole, and then collected aircraft debris and piled it on the grave as a memorial to the pilot.

Dr. Karimov kept a number of souvenirs from the site, including the metal aircraft identification plate with the aircraft type, serial number, order number and date accepted, as well as several bullets and a flying boot. He still has the identification plate and the bullets and would surrender them if they would aid in identifying the pilot.

Dr. Karimov says that he knows the exact location of this aircraft and will be pleased to help recover the remains of the aviator.

The information that Dr. Karimov provided was given to the US Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. They were able to determine that the aircraft in question was a P-40 (Curtiss "Warhawk") manufactured at Buffalo, New York. It had been accepted by the Army Air Force on 15 August 1942, when it left Buffalo en route to Alaska. By 10 September 1942, the aircraft had arrived at Ladd Army Air Force Base, Alaska, where on the same day the Soviet Union signed for the aircraft. There is no information when the P-40 departed Alaska for the Soviet Union. DPMO analysts have concluded that the remains found in the aircraft are most likely those of the Soviet pilot who was ferrying the aircraft to the Soviet Union. This information should assist in resolving the fate of a missing Soviet serviceman.

At least eleven other Soviet servicemen and one civilian died and were buried in Alaska during World War II from various causes. These people and all known information about them, including burial sites, have been brought to the attention of our Russian colleagues.²

Bilateral Document Exchange

¹ Appendix III: "What's in a Name?" discusses some of the problems encountered in identifying American service personnel caused by differences between Russian and English.

² This information is included as APPENDIX IX: "Russians Buried in Alaska."

The Russian side of the Joint Commission has presented the US side with copies of almost 6,000 pages of Russian archival documents dealing with World War II. Even though these documents have not resulted in the resolution of as many cases as we would like, they are nevertheless a valuable research tool. Similarly, copies of over 4,000 pages of US archival materials given to the Russian side also have had an impact. These documents aided them in arriving at a more accurate accounting of Soviet losses during World War II. This culminated in May 1995 when Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced during the victory celebration in Moscow that Soviet World War II losses from all causes amounted to 26,452,000 Soviet citizens.³

In order to answer the general and specific questions that the World War II Working Group was charged with addressing, an in-depth review of the history of the World War II POW experience was required. This historical review allowed us to place into perspective what was known about the World War II experience of American POWs who fell into the hands of the Red Army, to furnish additional information for use in analyzing discrepancy cases and other disputed issues, as well as provide us a foundation from which to develop new issues.

The historical review and conclusions are followed by a section relating to ongoing issues and seven appendices.

³ Appendix IV: "Soviet Citizens In Custody of the Western Allies After WWII" describes some of the documentation from American archives that we furnished to our Russian colleagues and discusses some possible conclusions that can be reached from the material.

THE EXPERIENCE OF AMERICAN POWS LIBERATED BY THE SOVIETS, 1944-45

The principal effort of the American side of the World War II Working Group has been to research, using Russian and US archival sources, and analyze the wartime experience of those American prisoners of war liberated by the Red Army.⁴ The remainder of this report is an account of our findings to date.

This report will describe the process that brought thousands of United States military personnel who were prisoners of war held by the Germans (and one group held by the Japanese) into the hands of Soviet forces in the concluding weeks of World War II. Because those Americans liberated from German POW camps in Poland and central Germany constitute the largest number, the report will concentrate on that experience, although it also will examine the ordeal of POWs and internees who elsewhere had contacts with Soviet authorities. The report will describe in some detail the experience at specific German POW camps, some evacuated in the face of the Soviet advance, and some overrun by the Red Army. It will discuss what happened to those American prisoners whom the Germans tried to keep out of Soviet hands by marching them west, as well as what happened to those POWs the Soviets liberated. The narrative will address such issues as how the liberated prisoners were treated by the Soviets and how they were returned to US military control. The report will review those measures undertaken by both the Soviets and Americans in 1944 and 1945 to plan for, document, and account for the liberated prisoners and, importantly, will point out those organizational and practical problems that served to frustrate, complicate, and confuse an accurate accounting. It will analyze the contemporary evidence on the numbers of US POWs freed from German camps in the Soviet zone in the context of the overall postwar American casualty clearance and accounting process. This report will focus on what the documentary and other evidence indicates actually happened to American prisoners of war. It will not address Soviet motivation, hidden agendas, or possible political machinations.

⁴ APPENDIX I: "Roles, Missions, and Definitions" provides information on some of the more important organizations involved in recovering POWs during World War II and definitions of frequently used terms.

American POWs Repatriated from Rumania and Bulgaria, 1944

From 1 August 1943, the date of the first major American air raid on the Ploesti, Rumania, oil refineries, American aircrews downed in air operations over southeast Europe were held in Rumanian and Bulgarian POW camps. There were at least three camps administered by Bulgarian and seven by Rumanian military authorities, plus several military hospitals which held wounded prisoners. All of the POWs captured as a result of these air operations over southeastern Europe remained in Bulgarian or Rumanian, not German, custody. These camps, generally near Sofia or Bucharest, were in the area ultimately occupied by the Soviet Army during August and September 1944.

As the Red Army advanced westward during late summer 1944, Rumania and Bulgaria, both allied with the Germans, faced inevitable occupation by the Soviets. Rumania, which had quietly been negotiating with the western Allies since the spring, essentially dropped out of the war on 23 August. Two days later Rumania declared war on its erstwhile ally, Germany. Unfortunately, from a Rumanian perspective, this did not forestall Soviet occupation of the country. Bulgaria, a military ally of the Germans against Great Britain and the United States but not against the USSR, on 26 August ordered German forces within its borders disarmed, affirmed its neutrality toward the Soviets, and sought an armistice with the Americans and British. These political moves saved neither the Rumanians nor Bulgarians. The Red Army shortly occupied both countries.⁵

Almost simultaneously with the Rumanian and Bulgarian capitulations, the British and American POWs held in those countries were released and evacuated. Because Soviet troops were moving into the area, Soviet authorities were informed of these movements, but played no active role in the evacuation. On 23 August 1944, the US 15th Air Force provided aerial evacuation from Bucharest to Italy for 1,109 US POWs. The Swiss government and International Red Cross had made the

⁵ Albert Seaton, The Russo-German War, 1941-45 (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 467-501; Earl F. Ziemke, Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1968), pp. 346-371.

necessary diplomatic arrangements with the Rumanian government to effect the transfers.⁶ In early September a similar effort recovered 251 US POWs from Bulgaria, arranged through diplomatic channels by the American Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. On 10 September, British and American prisoners subsequently proceeded by truck convoy from Bulgaria across Turkey to a Royal Air Force base in Syria from where they were flown to Cairo.⁷

There were a few stragglers, mostly sick or wounded, among the US prisoners in Rumania and Bulgaria, who did not come out in the initial, 23 August and 10 September releases from those countries. The Soviets assisted in the eventual recovery of these men. The US Military Mission to Moscow reported on 4 November 1944: "As far as we are able to judge, all American prisoners of war have been evacuated from RUMANIA and BULGARIA."⁸

Soviet Internment and Repatriation of American Fliers Downed in the Far East

During wartime a neutral country is obliged under international law to intern for the duration of the war combatants from belligerent countries who come into its custody within its borders. Release of such internees before the termination of hostilities is a violation of neutrality and could involve the neutral country in the war.

On several occasions during World War II, American fliers operating in the Pacific against Japan were forced to land within the borders of the Soviet Union, until August 1945 a neutral in the war against the Japanese. These fliers created a dilemma for the Soviet Union. On the one hand, premature

⁶ Casualty Branch AGO to Distribution, "Air Force Personnel Recovered from Rumania," 19 September 1944; also series of State Department telegrams dated 23 August, 8 September and 11 September 1944, PWIB Subject File, "Camps-Rumania," box 2155, entry 460A, RG 389, NA.

⁷ Casualty Branch AGO to Distribution, "Air Forces Personnel Recovered from Rumania and Bulgaria," 14 October 1944, "Camps-Rumania," box 2155; US Military Attaché Turkey, "Report on Treatment of Allied POWs in Bulgaria," 23 September 1944; and State Dep. telegrams dated 7,8,11,14,19 and 27 September 1944, "Camps-Bulgaria," box 2139, PWIB Subject File, entry 460A, RG 389; Lt.Col. John W. Richardson to A-2 15th Air Force, "Evacuation of Allied POWs from Bulgaria," 19 September 1944, File 200.6, AAG Classified Decimal File, 1945, box 17, entry 294A, RG 18, NA.

⁸ Deane to SHAEF, Message 21613, 4 November 1944, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA.

release of the internees could prompt hostilities or at least rupture diplomatic relations between the USSR and Japan. Yet the Soviets, because of their alliance with the United States in the war against Germany and their long-standing enmity toward Japan, had considerable sympathy for the internees and desired to see them returned to American control as soon as possible.

On 16 April 1942, the first American aircrew came down on Soviet territory, in the Far East, 25 miles north of Vladivostok. The plane, a B-25 piloted by Captain Edward J. York, was one of the “Doolittle Raiders” which had just bombed Japan. Between April 1942 and September 1945, as a result of air operations against the Japanese, 291 American fliers (37 crews) landed and were interned in the USSR. (Three other crew members died in the crashes, and a fourth died later as result of injuries sustained in the crash.) All of the crews landed in the Soviet Far East, near Vladivostok, Kamchatka, or Petropavlovsk. Most were Army Air Forces crews, although eleven were crews of Navy planes. All of the Navy and 20 of the 26 Army Air Forces crews were flying missions from the Aleutians against the Kuriles or the northern Japanese home islands. Weather, mechanical problems, or enemy action forced them down on Soviet territory. During 1944-45, five B-29 crews operating from bases in China also were among those interned.

The Soviets held these airmen in accordance with international conventions, with the exception of the York crew, who were treated royally, they were all held in conditions considered primitive to Americans. All but one of the crews ended up at an internment camp in the town of Verevsk, in Uzbekistan, 60 kilometers south of Tashkent. The detention facility was a large, one-story brick building which previously had been a school. The crews remained in custody an average of five months, with the longest internment lasting thirteen months. But eventually the Soviets released, albeit unconventionally, all of the American internees.

Although its obligations under international law prohibited the USSR from repatriating or otherwise releasing these internees, that did not prevent the internees from “escaping.” The Soviet Foreign Commissariat and the Internal Affairs Commissariat staged a series of elaborate operations, “escapes,” by which the American internees got out of the Soviet Union and returned to US control, most went by way of Tashkent to Teheran, Iran. The five operations occurred 11 May 1943 (five

men), 18 February 1944 (61 men), 30 January 1945 (130 men), 27 May 1945 (43 men) and 24 August 1945 (52 men). In order to preserve the pretense of Soviet neutrality, both the Russians and the Americans tried to conduct the releases in great secrecy, without even releasing the names of the returned fliers. In this regard they were not entirely successful.

The documentary record relating to the circumstances by which these fliers came into Soviet control, to the details of the detention, and to their release is extensive. The entire story is told in Otis Hays, Jr., Home From Siberia, which contains detail on the experience of each of the 37 crews and an accounting, by name, of all of the detainees. There are no unanswered questions regarding the fate of the 291 American airmen detained during World War II by the USSR after being downed in the Soviet Far East.⁹

Liberation of American POWs from the Japanese in Manchuria

On 8 August 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and the following day launched a massive offensive into Japanese occupied Manchuria.

The Japanese held American prisoners of war at two sites in Manchuria. The largest camp was at Hoten, three miles northeast of Mukden, in an industrial area adjacent to the main rail line leading to the city of Harbin. At the time of liberation, this camp held 280 US officers and 1,038 enlisted men.¹⁰ A smaller, satellite camp at Hsian, approximately 100 miles northeast of the Hoten camp, held several dozen British, Dutch, and American VIP prisoners, including Lieutenant Generals Jonathan Wainwright

⁹ Otis Hays, Jr., Home From Siberia: The Secret Odysseys of Interned American Airmen in World War II (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1990). The Report of the US Military Mission to Moscow, 18 October 1943 - 31 October 1945, ID 929087, Top Secret Intelligence Documents, 1943-59, RG 319, NA, contains two long segments relating to the internees. The basic documentation is filed under "Internees" in the USMMM Subject File, box 11, entry 309, RG 334, NA; the report of Maj. John F. Waldron, on the " Trip to Tashkent, 2-30 December 1943, Verevsk Internment Camp," nicely describes the conditions under which the internees were held.

¹⁰ Capts. James L. Norwood and Emily Shek, "Prisoner of War Camps in Areas Other Than the Four Principal Islands of Japan," Liaison and Research Branch, PWIB, 31 July 1946, pp. 30-34; copy in reference collection, Military Reference Section, National Archives.

and A.E. Percival, the American commander in the Philippines and the British Singapore commander, respectively.¹¹

On 16 August 1945, a six man Office of Strategic Services (OSS) team parachuted into Mukden. They contacted Colonel Matsuda, the Japanese camp commandant, and immediately began efforts to contact Wainwright at Hsian and coordinate the evacuation of the main camp at Hoten. One member of the team left by train on 18 August for Hsian; on 26 August he returned to Mukden with Wainwright and his party.

In the meanwhile, the Soviet Army moved into the area. The first Red Army troops arrived in Mukden on 19 August by air. By 21 August the 6th Guards Tank Army of the Trans-Baikal Front had arrived in force. A number of incidents between Americans and Soviet troops, involving harassment and robbery, occurred in the early days after the Soviet arrival. According to Lieutenant Colonel James F. Donovan, the eventual leader of the US evacuation effort, most of the incidents stemmed from a few “ignorant” and often drunken Russian soldiers not identifying the Americans as such. By contrast, Donovan noted that most Russian soldiers were “universally enthusiastic about Americans and loudly proclaimed their friendship when passing in the streets.” None of the incidents seriously interfered with the evacuation of the American POWs. In fact, the Soviets were instrumental in assisting the American POW contact team with the evacuation effort. The Soviets were especially helpful in procuring transportation used in the evacuation and in providing general manpower support, a crucial need given the large number of prisoners to be evacuated and the small number of Americans in the contact team. That a number of Russian officers, including the Soviet commander, Major General Pritula, were recommended for American decorations gives some indication of the level of cooperation between the US and Soviet authorities in Mukden.

On 29 August 1945, the nineteen-man POW Recovery Team No. 1 arrived in Mukden to reinforce and assist the initial OSS contact team. With the arrival of the larger team, processing of the liberated POWs began in earnest. Much of this effort involved paperwork; POWs filling out

¹¹ LtCol Harry W. Little, Jr. (Field Service Division, OSS, China Theater), POW Humanitarian Teams, 4 October 1945, PWIB Subject File, "Manchuria," box 2134, entry 460A, RG 389, NA.

identification forms and completing questionnaires concerning possible war crimes violations by their Japanese captors. It also involved immunizations and other medical treatment of the prisoners and graves registration work. Remains of POWs buried in the camp cemetery were identified and prepared for exhumation and eventual reburial in permanent American military cemeteries.

Evacuation of American POWs from the Mukden area began shortly after the initial OSS team arrived and ended by mid-September. The first group left by air on 21 August, eighteen POWs needing immediate medical assistance. Another thirty medical cases were evacuated by air on 24 August. On 27 August General Wainwright and the other VIPs departed by air. But most of the POWs went by train from Mukden to the port of Darien, where they boarded US Navy ships, the hospital ship USS Relief and the transport USS Colbert, for evacuation to Okinawa and then home. Aboard ship they were deloused, issued new clothing, and received additional medical and dental treatment as needed. The railroad movements from Mukden to Darien occurred on 10 and 11 September. Relief sailed from Darien for Okinawa on 12 September, Colbert departed on the 13 August. The POW Recovery Team closed out its operation on 19 September 1945 and left Mukden by air for China Theater headquarters in Kunming.

The early arrival of the OSS contact team (even before Soviet troops were on the scene), the additional assistance of POW Recovery Team No. 1, and the cooperation of the Soviet forces in the area assured the timely and comparatively smooth evacuation of the US prisoners of war from Manchuria.¹²

Diplomatic Planning for POW Repatriation from German Occupied Europe

On 11 June 1944, the US Military Mission to Moscow first informed Soviet authorities of the possibility that the Red Army advance into eastern and central Europe would uncover German prisoner

¹² The most detailed account of the effort, including rosters of the evacuated POWs, is LtCol. J.F. Donovan's, Report of Recovery Team #1 Evacuation of Camp Hoten, Manchuria, 22 September 1945, AG Classified Decimal File, 1943-45, "383.6 (2 November 1945)," box 2437, entry 360, RG 407, NA. Additional information can be found in USMMM Subject File, "POWs-Prisoners of the Japanese," box 23, entry 309, RG 334, NA. The recently published book by Gavan Daws, Prisoners of the Japanese:

of war camps and result in the liberation of US POWs who would require repatriation; that prospect seemed, particularly in light of subsequent events, not to have occurred to the Soviets. The military mission requested that the Red Army promptly inform American authorities when US POWs were liberated. Over the next several months the Americans made additional entreaties to the Russians on the subject but received little response. The Americans wanted to establish regular channels of communication for exchange of information on impending and actual liberations, to stockpile POW relief supplies in reasonable proximity to those areas containing camps likely to be liberated, to insure Soviet agreement that American contact teams would be admitted promptly to the areas where liberated POWs were located, and to guarantee the quick evacuation and repatriation of the prisoners.¹³

On 4 September 1944, General Deane, head of the military mission, appointed a board of officers led by Colonel James C. Crockett to prepare a comprehensive evacuation and repatriation plan. The plan they formulated incorporated in considerable detail the basic information exchange, supply, contact team, and evacuation concerns previously indicated.¹⁴ Even though on 8 September Deane had invited the Soviets to participate in a joint planning effort, there was virtually no Russian interest in the subject for several months. General Deane, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, and American Charge' d' Affaires George F. Kennan (who headed the American diplomatic mission in Moscow whenever Harriman was absent) frequently reiterated the American position on POW repatriation to their Soviet colleagues. Finally, on 30 November, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, V.M.

POWs of World War II in the Pacific (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1994), pp. 333-45, includes some information relating the liberation of the POWs in Manchuria.

¹³ The records of the US Military Mission to Moscow and of various SHAEF staff sections contain considerable documentation relating to bilateral US-USSR diplomatic exchanges on POW repatriation. There are two excellent summaries of these proceedings: Report of the US Military Mission to Moscow, 18 October 1943 - 31 October 1945, ID 929087, pp. 93-96, Top Secret Intelligence Documents, 1943-59, RG 319, NA; and, "Memorandum for Ambassador Harriman," 23 March 1945, [this is a chronological listing of communications relating to POWs between the military mission and Soviet authorities between 11 June 1944, and 23 March 1945] USMMM Subject File, "POWs," box 24, entry 309, RG 334, NA.

¹⁴ "Plan for the Evacuation of POW from Territories under Russian Control" [includes five appendices], USMMM Subject File, "POWs-Personnel Evacuated Through Odessa," box 22, entry 309, RG 334, NA.

Molotov, informed Kennan that his government agreed in principle to the American proposals. Still nothing further happened for another seven weeks.

On 21 January 1945, following liberation of the first US POW camp by the Red Army, General Deane met with Lieutenant General K.D. Golubev, deputy chief of the Soviet Repatriation Commission, to negotiate a POW agreement. They discussed terms of reciprocal treatment of liberated POWs. Their discussions formed the basis for a final agreement reached and signed on 11 February 1945, at the Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. The principal provisions were:

1. Liberating forces would maintain freed POWs in camps or at concentration points until turned over to their own governmental authorities.
2. Liberating forces would immediately notify the home governments that the prisoners had been freed.
3. Representatives of the governments of the liberated prisoners would have immediate access to the camps or points of concentration where they were held pending repatriation.
4. The liberating country would be responsible for outside protection of the camps, while the internal administration would be under control of officials from the country of those liberated.
5. The liberating country would provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention, until the prisoners returned to the authorities of their own country.
6. Each country could use its own means of transport to repatriate its POWs held by the liberating power.

The USSR and United Kingdom also signed a similar POW agreement at Yalta.¹⁵ From the time the agreement was signed in early February until the end of March 1945, by which date the bulk of American POWs liberated by the Red Army in Poland had been evacuated from Odessa, diplomatic and military officials at the US embassy in Moscow worked to get Soviet compliance. In particular, the Americans wanted admission of contact teams to the Soviet zone of operations and rapid air evacuation

¹⁵ Appendix IV, pp. 135-38, includes the text of the Yalta Agreement, Chief Historian, European Command, RAMP's: The Recovery and Repatriation of Liberated Prisoners of War (Frankfurt-am-Main: European Command, 1947).

of liberated prisoners. The effort, which included at least one letter from President Roosevelt to Premier Stalin on the subject, had little effect: "The actual implementation of the agreement broke down in nearly all respects because of Soviet failure to live up to any terms of the agreement." Thus, although "...all of the American prisoners known to have been liberated by the Red Army were eventually evacuated...", this was accomplished "under the most difficult conditions imaginable."¹⁶

The Yalta POW accord specified that liberated prisoners would be transported promptly to agreed upon transfer points. Until late April 1945, Odessa was the only such transfer point. As Soviet forces moved westward, Odessa became further and further removed from the area where additional Allied prisoners likely would be found. US and British authorities did not want their liberated POWs moved eastward over a thousand miles to be repatriated through Odessa, when the front-lines of the Soviet Army and those of SHAEF forces were separated by only a hundred miles or less and were rapidly converging. The Russians agreed that overland exchanges of prisoners, not continued evacuation to Odessa, were the most practical solution as the war in Europe drew to a close. As the converging armies met in late April and early May, arrangements worked out between local commanders governed POW exchanges between the Soviets and the US and British.¹⁷

For those many more Allied prisoners to be exchanged across front-lines than had been already evacuated through Odessa.(SHAEF saw the need for consensus with the Russians on how to practically effect the detail of repatriations in the West) Between 16 and 22 May 1945, Major General Ray W. Barker, the SHAEF Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1), and Lieutenant General K.D. Golubev, representing the Soviet repatriation authority, met at Halle, Germany. The general principles agreed to at Yalta provided the framework for the Halle discussions. With respect to the return of western Allied prisoners, the Halle meeting centered on working out the administrative details for the prompt release and return to SHAEF control of all British and American POWs, using available air or

¹⁶ Report of the US Military Mission to Moscow, 18 October 1943 - 31 October 1945, pp. 95-96, ID 929087, Top Secret Intelligence Documents, 1943-59, RG 319, NA.

¹⁷Troopers [the British Military Mission in Moscow] to SHAEF, Message 87815, 23 April 1945; Troopers to SHAEF, Message 90386, 2 May 1945, SHAEF AG Decimal File, "383.6-1," box 185, entry 56, RG 331, NA.

motor transport. Despite the seemingly straight forward-nature of this problem, the Soviets prolonged the negotiations, citing practical and administrative obstacles and tying rapid release of American, British, and other Allied POWs to repatriation of all Soviet prisoners and displaced persons in the West, many of whom did not want to return to the Soviet Union. The conferees finally reached agreement on a plan in the early morning hours of 22 May. They finalized delivery and reception points for each side, transportation plans, daily transit capacities of each of the reception-delivery points, and other details. Barker and Golubev signed the Halle Agreement on 22 May 1945. Its impact for US POWs, however, was not that significant. Most Americans liberated by the Soviets in central Germany and along the Baltic coast(23,421 according to 12th Army Group), had been exchanged by local arrangement prior to implementation of the Halle Agreement on 23 May.¹⁸

German Evacuation of Allied Prisoners from POW Camps

During 1945, the Soviet Army overran, in two sequences, German camps that held US POWs. The experiences of the prisoners released by the Soviets was considerably different depending on whether they were liberated during late-January to early-February in Poland and East Prussia, or during April and May in central and northern Germany.

Most of the US prisoners in the early sequence came from Oflag 64 at Schubin, Poland, Stalag III-C near Kustrin, Poland, with a few from Stalag II-B, Hammerstein, Germany. The Soviets evacuated these men to the east and most of them eventually came out through Odessa. They comprise a relatively small portion, about ten percent, of all American prisoners that were in Soviet hands; contemporary accounts have 2,858 evacuated by way of Odessa. But because of the smaller numbers,

¹⁸ Memorandum for General Barker, "British/US/Russian POW Exchange Arrangements," 13 April 1945; Memorandum for Colonel Straub, "British/Russian POW Exchange Arrangements," 13 May 1945, File 370.05-12 ("Delivery Thru Army Lines of POWs and Civilians..."), SHAEF G-1 PWX Decimal File, box 76, entry 7, RG 331, NA. Barker to SHAEF Chief of Staff, "Report on Conference with Russian Officials Relative to Repatriation of POWs and DPs," 23 May 1945; Barker to SHAEF Repatriation Planning Group, "Repatriation of Russian and Allied Personnel," 17 May 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "337/2-Conferences-Halle," box 21, entry 6, RG 331, NA. SHAEF to AGWAR, Message S-89142, 23 May 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA. "Memorandum to Colonel Borden," 26 May 1945 [annotated to 2 June], 12th Army Group G-1 Subject File, "103-A/PW (US/BR), box 23, entry 165, RG 331, NA.

the more direct involvement of the US Military Mission to Moscow, and the somewhat more routine evacuation procedures, the Odessa evacuation is better documented and more frequently written about than the liberation of POWs which took place later in central Germany.

As the Russians moved into western Poland and East Prussia during January and February 1945, the Germans began evacuating the POW camps in that area and moved the prisoner populations into camps further west. These movements had a significant, negative impact on the POWs and on the orderly recovery of liberated prisoners by the western Allies. Some of the POWs who were marched west came out of the Soviet zone without ever really having been in Red Army custody, that is being controlled administratively and physically by the Soviets. By far most of the US POWs liberated by the Soviets came from about a half dozen camps in central and northern Germany, which by late-April and early-May 1945 were overcrowded with large numbers of men previously evacuated from the camps further east. This group of US POWs, totaling about 25,000, returned to military control across the front-lines from the Soviet to the SHAEF sectors.

The Allied POWs whom the Germans marched west suffered from extreme weather conditions, including subfreezing cold and blizzards, shortages of food and shelter, and from the sheer exertion required in the movement, most of which was by foot. The movements of US and British prisoners from Stalag Luft III (Sagan), Stalag Luft VIII (Bankau), and Stalag III-B (Furstenburg) to Stalag III-A (Luckenwalde) during late-January and early-February 1945 created special hardships. Because of concern for the prisoners being evacuated, SHAEF authorities attempted to keep track of the movements, as well as tried to adjust estimates on the changing prisoner populations in individual German camps. Reports from the International Red Cross and the protecting powers (the neutral Swedes and Swiss) were important sources for this information. But even as the moves concluded in April 1945, SHAEF admitted that it had inadequate, incomplete information as to the numbers and purpose of the evacuations: "It is impossible to assess what is the purpose of this attempt to retain PW to the last." Speculation included use as hostages in the Alpenstellung (the suspected, but not real

Alpine redoubt), or even that the Germans planned to massacre them in the end.¹⁹ Allied authorities foresaw another consequence of the evacuations: "In view of conditions of evacuation, large numbers of stragglers must be anticipated." The number of actual stragglers, of course, affected the accuracy of contemporary estimates on the numbers of POWs evacuated who actually reached another camp.²⁰

The consequences of the German movements included not only hardships during the marches, but significant overcrowding at the camps to which the POWs were moved. At Luckenwalde, Albert Kadler, a Swiss observer, noted: "There is excessive overcrowding in all compounds.... The floor space... is supposed to accommodate 200 men, while at present 400 men are living in each room."²¹ The overcrowding negatively affected nearly all aspects of camp life, causing in particular health and safety problems. In order to alleviate the suffering caused by the evacuation marches, in mid-February 1945 Major General Ray Barker, the SHAEF Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel and the officer responsible for recovery of Allied POWs, recommended that the US and British governments approach the German government, through the Swiss or Swedish governments, to urge ending the evacuations; as German forces withdrew, POWs would simply "stay put" in the camps to be liberated by the advancing armies, whether Soviet in the east or the other allies in the west. Eventually the Germans adopted this

¹⁹ SHAEF PWX Fortnightly Bulletin No. 8, 18 April 1945, 12th Army Group G-1 Subject File, "114," box 24, entry 165, RG 331, NA.

²⁰ War Office to 30 Military Mission Moscow, 7 February 1945, Message 66400 PW-2, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "254," box 13, entry 6, RG 331, NA. Detailed accounts of the evacuation marches are enclosed with Cyril Gepp to Maj.Gen. R.W. Barker, 22 March 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA; "Information Relating to Movements of POWs in Eastern Germany and Austria," War Office Serial Report 0103/6753/P.W.2. with amendments, 20 February to 26 April 1945, SHAEF G-1 PWX Decimal File, "370.05-24 Allied POWs in Russian Zone," box 75, entry 7, RG 331, NA; and, "Statement or Report Of Interview Of Recovered Personnel," 2Lt. Robert O. Hochritt, 12 August 1945, and 1Lt. Leland J. Harp, 30 July 1945, AGO Classified Decimal File, 1943-45, "383.6 (21 Aug. 45) and (7 Sept. 45)", box 2438, entry 360, RG 407, NA. Two published works contain extensive accounts of the evacuation marches from Oflag 64, both to the east with the Soviets and to the west with the Germans: Howard Randolph Holder, Escape to Russia (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Company, 1994), and Clarence R. Meltesen, Roads To Liberation From Oflag 64 (San Francisco: Oflag 64 Press, 1990).

“stay put” policy. But because it did not take effect until 21 April 1945, the migration of the POW population continued for some time. During those intervening weeks, the Germans moved more than a 100,000 POWs of various nationalities westward away from the Red Army. At least a few thousand perished in the process. Others suffered serious health problems as a consequence. SHAEF never determined the exact numbers variously affected and had only estimated the actual numbers moved. But the evacuations did put many western Allied prisoners in camps more likely to be liberated by American and British forces than had they “stayed put” in Poland and East Prussia.²²

German POW Camps, the Red Army Advance, and American Prisoners

By 1945 most of the American POWs in German custody were concentrated in a dozen camps with prisoner populations of several thousand each. A somewhat smaller number were scattered in dozens of small camps, transit camps, work kommandos, and hospitals. In order to make successful escape as difficult as possible, the Germans tried to locate the large camps holding western Allied military personnel as far east as possible. This placed these POWs in the zone most likely to be liberated by the Soviet Army advancing from the east.

Although Allied authorities, at SHAEF, the War Office in London, the War Department in Washington, and the military missions in Moscow actively gathered information about these camps, the Soviet Army apparently had little prior knowledge about the locations, numbers, and conditions of the Allied POWs they would overrun. An American officer who served as liaison with the Soviets in Poland declared frankly: “... the Russian front lines had no knowledge of the camps prior to their capture.”²³ This lack of knowledge must explain in part the seeming unpreparedness of the Russians to

²¹ Albert Kadler, Report on Stalag III-A, 15 February 1945, enclosure to Gepp to Barker, 22 March 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA.

²² MajGen Ray W. Barker to Chief of Staff, 17 February 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA; and SHAEF G-1 to 12th Army Group, 6th Army Group, and COMZ, 21 April 1945, Message S-85780; British Military Attaché Berne to SHAEF G-1, 26 April 1945, Message MAS 0/807, SHAEF SGS Decimal File, "383.6," box 87, entry 1, RG 331, NA.

²³ Lt.Col. James D. Wilmeth, "Report on a Visit to Lublin, Poland, 27 February - 28 March 1945," USMMM Subject File, "POWs-Personnel Evacuated Through Odessa," box 22, entry 309, RG 334, NA.

provide for those Allied prisoners they did liberate. German actions, namely evacuation of many POWs to the west, further served to confuse and complicate the problem.

In the event, the Red Army liberated about five camps that included considerable numbers of American POWs. It liberated about a dozen more camps that still contained a few US prisoners, mostly stragglers too sick to be moved west. But most of the American prisoners initially in camps in the area overrun by the Red Army had been evacuated west by the Germans from January through April 1945, and were liberated by British or American forces.

An examination of what happened at the principal camps is essential to understand the process. In particular, the following account will emphasize the confusing conditions, the fluidity of the POW population as groups of prisoners were moved from one camp to another, and the difficulty authorities (German, Soviet, and Allied) had with maintaining accountability of numbers of POWs. These contemporary difficulties are only exacerbated when we attempt to understand what happened fifty years after the events.

A. *PARTIAL EVACUATION BY GERMANS AND SOVIETS*

A.1.

Camp. Oflag 64, Schubin, Poland (Altburgund in German)

Location. 3 kilometers northwest of Schubin; 53°01'N-17°44'E.

Camp population. At the time of its evacuation in January 1945 the camp strength was about 1,600 American POWs, mostly ground forces officers.

Population gains or losses. One of the more complicated accounts of POW camp evacuations relates to Oflag 64. It is essentially two stories: one involves POWs evacuated westward by the Germans; the other concerns POWs who moved eastward into the Soviet zone, including sick and immobile prisoners left behind at the camp and about 200 others who had escaped the westward evacuation and returned to the camp. The eventual liberation of each group was a long and arduous process.

Circumstances of liberation. On 21 January 1945, the Germans evacuated most of the US POWs in Oflag 64 to the west, away from the advance of the Soviet 2nd Belorussian Front.²⁴ But of the nearly 1,500 who began the march, only 500 completed the 345 mile trek that ended in exhaustion at Oflag XIII-B, Hammelburg, on 9 March. From 21 January to 1 March these prisoners walked westward; on

²⁴ Much of the information relating to Red Army units that liberated specific German POW camps is from the series German Armed Forces Situation Maps, "Lage Ost (Russia)," January-May 1945, Record Group 242, National Archives. These order-of-battle maps were maintained by the operations section of the Army General Staff ("Generalstab des Heeres") to keep track of unfolding operations on the Eastern Front.

Information from this source on dates of liberation and Soviet units involved, however, is at best tentative. Some of the information originally compiled by the Germans was inaccurate. In addition, the information from the maps required interpretation, also subject to error. Although the maps appear to have been updated daily, information about when a specific Russian unit overran a particular locale undoubtedly was not recorded immediately by the Germans as the event occurred. Neither do the maps provide clear evidence that a particular Soviet army liberated a specific town; the information reflects what appears to have been the likely liberating unit. Similarly, the precise command relationship between Soviet fronts and armies is not obvious from the original maps; information was derived from the physical proximity of organization symbols and inferred unit boundaries as they appear on the maps.

6 March they boarded railroad freight cars for the remainder of the journey to Hammelburg. Food and drinking water were in short supply during the evacuation, and shelter at night usually consisted of hay barns, stables, cow sheds, or machine sheds. Despite the cold and wet weather, the Germans often prohibited fire for warmth, to dry out shoes and clothes, and cook food. The Germans provided no medical supplies until 17 February.

Those survivors of Oflag 64 who reached Hammelburg on March 9 became part of the evacuation of that camp which began abortively on 27 March. That day, a small American armored task force reached Stalag XIII-B but lacked sufficient transport to evacuate the POWs. Most of those briefly liberated from Hammelburg on 27 March were soon recaptured by the Germans and sent to another camp, Stalag VII-A at Moosburg. This camp, the largest German concentration area for Allied POWs, was liberated by the Americans on 29 April 1945. A smaller group from Hammelburg, which included some of the original Oflag 64 POWs, went to another camp at Nuremberg.

When the Germans evacuated Oflag 64 on 21 January, they left behind 86 Americans under command of Colonel Frederick W. Drury, who were sick or otherwise unable to travel. Within two days Russian forces arrived to liberate these men. But it required prolonged discussions between Drury and the Soviet corps commander, Colonel General Belov, before evacuation plans proceeded. Finally, on 28 January the sick POWs left Schubin by truck for Rembertow, Poland, where they arrived on 31 January. They remained at Rembertow, a refugee processing center, for three weeks.

Meanwhile, about 200 Americans escaped from the group the Germans had evacuated westward from Oflag 64 on 21 January. Those who escaped headed east, toward the Soviet lines. Some returned to the site of the camp and were taken by the Russians to Rembertow with Col. Drury and the sick POWs. Others made their own way, with more or less help from Poles and Soviets, to Rembertow. Still others walked, hitchhiked, or found other means to get to Lublin, Warsaw, and eventually to Moscow, Poltava, or Odessa in the Soviet Union.

On 22 February the Russians sent Drury's group of POWs from Rembertow by train to Odessa. They reached that the Black Sea port on 1 March for eventual return by ship and plane to the US.²⁵

In microcosm, the Oflag 64 experience demonstrates the difficulty in accounting for the American POWs who were in the area eventually occupied by the Soviet Army. Large groups of POWs by their own actions, because of sickness and other physical problems, and by German design, over a period of weeks, fragmented and became small groups and individual stragglers. They were indeed at the mercy of the enemy, the elements, the local population, and even their allies, the Soviets.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 1,040 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Oflag 64 (code 045).²⁶

²⁵ Appendix II describes the information in and the limitations to the machine-readable data used for the accounting of POWs liberated from each camp. The POWs in this database listed as returned to military control (RMC) underrepresents, as explained in the appendix, the actual number for each camp. Despite this undercounting, these numbers have been used in this study to provide a minimum number of recovered POWs and to indicate some comparison of the numbers among the several camps.

²⁶ TK Nenninger telecon with Brooks E. Kleber (former POW at Oflag 64), 26 July 1995. EX Report No. 576, March 29, 1945, "LtCol. Frederick W. Drury (Oflag 64)," EX Report No. 677, 1 July 1945, "2ndLt. Richard D. Englehart (Oflag 64)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 35-43 and pp. 93-99, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389. MIS-X, WDGS, "Statements of Evacuees from German P/W Camps Reporting Experiences in Russia," 3 April 1945, ETO MIS-X Decimal Correspondence, "383.6-POWs(Allied)", box 9, RG 332. Statement of Colonel F.W. Drury, enclosed with TAG to USMMM, 3 April 1945; LtCol J.D. Wilmeth, "Report of 3 POWs at ESCOM," 21 February 1945, USMMM Subject File, "POWs," box 23, entry 309, RG 334. Capt. F.C. Fitchen, "Report of 8 Officers from Oflag 64 at Poltava," March 6, 1945, USMMM Subject File, "POWs," box 22, entry 309, RG 334, NA. Published accounts of the varied experiences of those liberated from Oflag 64 include Howard Randolph Holder, *Escape to Russia* (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Co., 1994), and Clarence R. Meltesen, *Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64* (San Francisco: Oflag 64 Press, 1990).

A.2.

Camp. Stalag III-C, Kustrin, Poland

Location. In Drewitz, northeast of Kustrin; 52°40'N-14°50'E.

Camp population. At its peak, prior to evacuation, Stalag III-C held about 2,000 US ground forces enlisted personnel.

Circumstances of liberation. When Soviet forces approached Kustrin on 31 January 1945, the Germans evacuated the Allied POWs by foot to the west. The evacuation column got only a mile or two from the camp before running into Soviet troops, who fired on the POWs killing five before clear identification was made. After this firefight the German guards fled. The Soviet combat troops continued their advance toward the west, uninterested in the POWs who returned to the camp they recently had evacuated.

The US POWs remained at Stalag III-C under their own control for several days before other Soviet troops arrived, about 1-2 February 1945; but even then, the Soviets did virtually nothing to provide for or to exercise control over, the American POWs. The liberating Soviet unit was likely the 5th Shock Army of the 1st Belorussian Front. In early February 1945, the Soviets ordered the POWs to leave Stalag III-C and go to Warsaw, Poland, a distance of more than 200 miles. The Soviets provided no food, shelter, or transport; most of these POWs organized themselves into small groups, perhaps half a dozen men each, and found their own way to Warsaw, walking much of the way, but catching occasional rides on Soviet army trucks. In Warsaw the Soviets organized the Allied POWs into larger groups and moved them by train to Odessa.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Germans evacuated to the west perhaps as many as 200 to 300 of the US POWs from Kustrin. The remaining group was evacuated to the east by the Soviets, straggling under little control, therefore precise accounting from this camp is problematic. But the largest group was liberated by the Russians and eventually repatriated through Odessa, although a few Americans from III-C returned by way of Moscow or Poltava.

The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 1,420 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag III-C (code 005).²⁷

A.3.

Camp. Stalag II-B, Hammerstein, Prussia

Location. In west Prussia, east of Neustettin; 53°41'N- 16°58'E.

Camp population. At its peak, in January 1945, this camp was responsible for about 7,200 American ground forces enlisted men. In actuality over 5,000 of these POWs were out in nine work kommandos, not physically housed in the main camp.

Population gains or losses. On 29 January 1945, the Germans began evacuating POWs from the main camp and the kommandos; this became one of the more disorganized and protracted of the evacuation marches.

Circumstances of liberation. A contemporary American observer of the Allied POW situation in Poland stated that few (he estimated 100) of the US POWs at Hammerstein fell into Soviet hands when the Red Army occupied Stalag II-B and the surrounding area on 26 February. The occupying troops were from the 2nd Belorussian Front, probably the 19th Army.

As the several evacuation columns from Stalag II-B marched west, the Germans dropped groups of POWs at other camps and at other work kommandos. The largest of these groups ending up at Marlag X-C, Westertimke, which was liberated by the British Army on 28 April Russian forces were

²⁷ TK Nenninger, Interview with Kenneth H. Bargmann (former POW from Stalag III-C), 9 May 1995, Washington DC. Spaatz to Deane, February 25, 1945, Message UA-64907; USMMM to USSTAF, 27 February 1945, Message M-22952, ETO MIS-X, Decimal Correspondence, "383.6-POWs(Allied)," box 9, RG 332. Hall (Odessa) to USMMM, 7 March 1945, Message O-52355, USMMM Subject File, "POWs," box 23, entry 309, RG 334, NA [on casualties at Kustrin]. Capt. W.C. Fitchen, "Report of Interview With 3 POWs at EUSCOM [Poltava]," 6 March 1945, USMMM Subject File, "POWs-Personnel Evacuated Through Odessa," box 22, entry 309, RG 334, NA. EX Report No. 672, 3 April 1945, "1st Sgt. Leroy Coleman (Stalag III-C)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA.

also in this area along the Baltic coast. But the Russians ignored many of the Allied POWs, which led the prisoners to liberate themselves. One former POW from Hammerstein, who spent the last month of the war at a large farm near Rostock, remembered: "The Russians swept through the area on 1 May. We received absolutely no help from them, so we made our way to the British outpost at Wismar on V-E Day. The next day the British moved us to Lubeck where U.S. B-17s picked us up and flew us out of Germany."

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 5,782 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag II-B (code 003).²⁸

²⁸ Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 54-63, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Lt.Col. James D. Wilmeth, "Report on a Visit to Lublin, Poland, 27 February - 28 March 1945," USMMM Subject File, "POWs-Personnel Evacuated Through Odessa," box 22, entry 309, RG 334, NA. EX Report No. 592, 20 April 1945, "Pfc. Billy H. Prichard (Stalag II-B)," EX Report No. 610, 17 May 1945, "MSgt. John M. McMahan (Stalag II-B)," EX Report No. 611, 17 May 1945, "Cpl. Alfred C. Carroll (Stalag II-B0," EX Report No. 612, 17 May 1945, "Pvt. Gunnar S. Drangsholt (Stalag II-B0," EX Report No. 613, 22 May 1945, "Sgt. Warren O. Allen (Stalag II-B)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Bob Ryan, "For You the War is Over," in Jane E. Thierry (ed.), Looking Back at War: National Archives Volunteers Remember World War II (Washington: National Archives, 1995), pp. 119-21.

**B. CAMPS EVACUATED BY THE GERMANS IN THE FACE OF THE SOVIET
ADVANCE AND POWS MOVED WEST**

B.1.

Camp. Stalag III-B, Furstenburg, Brandenburg, Prussia

Location. About 20 kilometers south of Frankfurt-am-Oder; 52°9'N- 14°42'E.

Camp population. In January 1945, the POW population had reached nearly 5,000 American enlisted men, mostly ground forces NCOs.

Population gains or losses. On 31 January 1945, with two hours notice, the Germans marched the entire camp population westward, in the face of the advancing Soviet 33rd Army, 1st Belorussian Front. Conditions on the march were difficult, through snow, ice, and deep puddles on the road. Food was in short supply. After seven days, and a 108-kilometer march, the POWs reached Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde.

Circumstances of liberation. The Americans who completed the march spent the remainder of the war at Luckenwalde. The Red Army liberated Luckenwalde on 22 April, but most POWs from this camp did not begin to return to military control until about 6 May (see the section on Stalag III-A).

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. So far as is known, no American POWs remained at Furstenburg after evacuation, although there were an undetermined number of casualties and stragglers during the march. Some of the stragglers probably went to camps other than Luckenwalde or were liberated outside of any camp.

The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 3,873 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag III-B (code 004).²⁹

²⁹ Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 64-73, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389. ETO Provost Marshal Section, "Nominal Rolls of American POWs-Hildesheim," box 1, RG 332, NA; the Hildesheim list identifies POWs liberated from III-A who appear on the VA list as RMC from III-B.

B.2.

Camp. Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Silesia

Location. About 120 kilometers southeast of Berlin; 51°35'N- 15°19'E.

Camp population. The largest officer's camp in Germany; in January 1945 the International Red Cross reported Sagan held over 6,800 Americans. It also included a large British contingent, mostly fliers.

Population gains or losses. On the evening of 27 January, the Germans gave the POWs at Sagan 30 minutes notice to evacuate and move west, away from the advancing Soviets of the 4th Guards Tank Army, 1st Ukrainian Front. The entire camp population, except for about 200 sick stragglers too weak to walk, began to march out of Stalag Luft III shortly before midnight on 27 January.

Circumstances of liberation. The POWs from the south and center compounds of Luft III went directly to Stalag VII-A, Moosburg, where they arrived on 31 January. Part of their journey had been in railroad freight cars. The north and west compounds marched and moved by train to Stalag XVIII-D, Nuremburg, which they reached on 4 February. Conditions at Nuremburg rapidly deteriorated as the influx of POWs from other camps, including Dulag Luft, Luft IV, and Oflag 64, sometimes reached a thousand a day. The Germans evacuated the American POWs from Nuremburg on April 3 and moved them toward Stalag VII-A, Moosburg. During that march, the German guards lost control and authority over the prisoners, many of whom dropped out of the column at will. Intimidated by the approach of the American Army, the Germans did little to stop the disintegration the bulk of the column, however reached Moosburg on 20 April, and was liberated by American units (on 27 April). But many POWs, especially stragglers, the sick, and escapees, who had been in Stalag Luft III in January 1945, returned to military control after being recovered in small groups or singly, often on the road or in the woods or at a private residence, and not from large masses liberated at Moosburg in April.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 6,123 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag Luft III (code 033).³⁰

B.3.

Camp. Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow, East Prussia

Location. Northeast of Berlin, near the Baltic coast, 53°51'N-16°15'E.

Camp population. This was a large camp, estimated in February 1945 to hold 8,600 US POWs, mostly Army Air Forces NCOs and enlisted men.

Population gains or losses. As Soviet troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front (probably 19th Army) advanced on the area, the Germans evacuated this camp beginning 6 February 1945, and marched the prisoners west. The final destination was to be Stalag XI-B, Fallingbostal.

Circumstances of liberation. Most of the POWs from Luft IV did not reach XI-B, but were liberated when the columns made contact with British and American units in late April and early May. Many prisoners had escaped the German columns and found freedom on their own. An American medical officer accompanying one of the columns tried to keep a record of the rations received from the Germans as well as of the sick and dead POWs, in order to later account for casualties and to "aid in establishing the guilt of our German captors as war criminals." Of the experience he reported: "On 6 Feb 1945 we were evacuated by foot. We marched to Stalag II B at Fallingbosted [sic] where we arrived 30 March 1945. It was a march of disease, suffering, filth, and starvation. On 6 April 1945 we were again evacuated by foot and we were still on the road when the English evacuated us on 2 May 1945."

³⁰ Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 22-34, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389, NA. EX Report No. 585, 16 April 1945, "Maj. Charles H. Diamond (Stalag Luft III)," EX Report No. 646, 17 May 1945, "Col. Delmar T. Spivey (Stalag Luft III)," EX Report No. 652, 26 April 1945, "Lt.Col. Wilbur W. Abing (Stalag Luft III)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Arthur A. Durand, Stalag Luft III (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1988), pp. 326-56.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 6,100 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag Luft IV (code 091).³¹

³¹ MIS-X, WDGS, 15 February 1945, "German Prisoner of War Camps With American PWs"; EX Report No. 619, May 15, 1945, "TSgt. Francis S. Paules (Stalag Luft IV)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Sgt. Mark N. Davis, 9 August 1945; TSgt. William P. Hurley, 14 August 1945; SSgt. James A. Lires, 11 September 1945; SSgt. Paul E. McNally, 11 September 1945; SSgt. June E. Roberson, 28 July 1945, "Statement or Report Of Interview Of Recovered Personnel," AGO Classified Decimal File, 1943-45, "383.6 (21 August 1945) (31 August 1945) (18 September 1945) (7 September 1945)", box 2438, entry 360, RG 407, NA. Capt. Leslie Caplan (MC) to Casualty Branch AGO, "Report on Stalag Luft IV," n.d., AG 704(2 April 1946), AGO Central Decimal File, 1946-48, box 1543, Entry 363, RG 407, NA.

C. CAMPS LIBERATED LATE BY SOVIETS, OR BY US AND SOVIETS

C.1.

Camp. Stalag Luft I, Barth, Prussia

Location. On the Baltic, 23 kilometers northwest of Stralsund, Rostock district; 54°22'N-12°42'E.

Camp population. US and British air force personnel, mostly officers.

Population gains or losses. There was no significant influx from other camps in 1945, but there had been a large increase during 1944; at the time of liberation the POW population approached 9,000 (US, UK, and other nationalities).

Circumstances of liberation. Because of its location further west and north than most German POW camps, Stalag Luft I was not evacuated in the face of the Soviet advance during March and April 1945. When on 30 April, the German commandant did order the Senior Allied Officer (SAO) to prepare the prisoners for evacuation, the SAO stated the Germans would have to use force in order to get the prisoners to move. Faced with the advancing Soviets, recalcitrant prisoners, and the prospect of bloodshed, the Germans abandoned the camp. On 1 May 1945 the SAO, who upon the German departure had assumed responsibility for maintaining order in the camp, sent out contact parties to meet with advancing Soviet troops. Soviet liberating forces were from the 65th Army (Colonel General Pavel Batov) of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Initially the Soviets showed little interest in the camp or the needs of the POWs for food and water, nor did they cooperate with Allied authorities to effect relief efforts or a timely evacuation of the prisoners from the camp. In fact, Soviet troops prevented such actions until 12 May when SHAEF began an aerial evacuation of the POWs; this operation was completed on 15 May.³²

³² Not all liberated Allied POWs at Barth, however, suffered significant deprivations. One American later reported to a former crew member held at a different POW camp: "After we were liberated by the Russians on May 1st were living the life of Riley at camp. Have roll-call at 8:30 A.M. & then have the rest of the day off. The B-17s came in on the 13th of May so we were there two weeks after being liberated. All the food we want and nothing to do but play ball & lie in the sun." "K.C" Micko [F/O Kenneth C. Micko] to "Bill" [1st Lt. William E. Shinn], 7 July 1945, in "Reports of Death of F/O Alfred

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. As late as 25 June 1945, one recovered POW, SSgt. Anthony Sherg, reported: "Possibility of several hundred American prisoners of war liberated from Stalag Luft One, Barth, are now confined by the Russian Army in the Rostock area...." Sherg indicated that he also had been held for several weeks at Rostock. Follow-up inquiries to the Soviets and further investigation, however, produced no confirmation of Sherg's information.

The postwar debriefing of Colonel Hubert Zemke, Senior American Officer at Barth, includes copies of important contemporary documents relating to conditions at the camp just before and subsequent to the Soviet liberation. One of the documents, dated on 14 May 1945, and signed by Soviet, British, and American officers, is essentially a receipt for 8,498 POWs (1,415 British and 7,083 Americans) turned over to the British and American authorities by the Soviets.

The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 4,298 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag Luft I (code 032). A Military Intelligence Service analysis, dated 1 November 1945, indicates that 7,717 US and 1,427 British POWs returned to military control in May 1945 from Stalag Luft I; the higher numbers probably reflect those POWs who made their own way west from Luft I and were not part of the formal exchange completed 14 May.³³

H. Janss...." AG 704-Dead (18 March 1945), AGO Central Decimal File 1940-45, box 4120, entry 360, RG 407, NA.

³³ EX Report No. 678, 19 July 1945, "Col. Hubert Zemke (Stalag Luft I)", CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A; Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 13-21, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389. G-1 Ninth Army to G-1 12th Army Group, 11 May 1945 Message, 12th Army Group G-1 Subject File, "103-A/PWs(US & Br.-General Policy), box 23, entry 165, RG 331. SHAEF to USMMM, 12th AG, 21st AG, 6th AG, 25 June 1945, Message S-92930, 12th Army Group Adjutant General Decimal File, "383.6-POWs Vol. VII," box 200, entry 198, RG 331, NA. CG Ninth Army to SHAEF G-1, 7 May 1945, Message KX-21057, SHAEF AG Decimal File, "383.6," box 186 entry 56, RG 331, NA.

Hubert Zemke (as told to Roger A. Freeman), *Zemke's Stalag* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 83-114, provides a detailed account of conditions at Barth during the Red Army's

C.2.

Camp. Stalag II-A, Neubrandenburg, Mecklenberg

Location. About 100 kilometers due north of Berlin; 53°35'N- 13°15'W.

Camp population. At the end of April 1945, Stalag II-A held about 1,100 US POWs, among other nationalities. Additionally there were about 2,600 Americans at satellite work camps within a 50-kilometer radius.

Population gains or losses. Neubrandenburg was one of those overcrowded camps in the Soviet zone that received POWs evacuated from camps further east. During March and April 1945 the Germans partially evacuated II-A, established a number of new work kommandos in the area, and marched other groups of prisoners from the advancing Russians, either west toward the Elbe River or north toward Rostock. Consequently, many of the Americans from Stalag II-A were liberated from the satellite work camps (such as the one at Parchim, D-601, overrun by the Soviets on 3 May) or while they were on the march, not from the main camp.³⁴

Circumstances of liberation. By late April 1945, conditions at Stalag II-A were critical because of overcrowding and lack of medical supplies. On 24 April SHAEF requested and the Allied military mission in Moscow received Soviet clearance to airdrop supplies into the camp. The Red Army, probably the 70th Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front, overran Neubrandenburg on 28 April. Liberation brought additional problems, including reports of Red Army soldiers harassing sick prisoners, continuing food shortages, and other incidents.

occupation of the camp. Zemke makes clear that although conditions were not ideal, the Russians mostly were cooperative in arranging evacuation of the liberated prisoners; but, "Understandably our situation was a low priority in the scheme of things" (p. 108). Nor does Zemke give any indication that any Allied POWs were not repatriated, as the report from Sergeant Sherg suggested. Had the Soviets held back any POWs, it is almost certain that Zemke, as Senior Allied Officer, would have known and would have commented on the situation. That he did not, either in his contemporary reports and debriefing or in his postwar memoir, strongly suggests it did not happen.

³⁴ File 100-401, JAG War Crimes Branch, boxes 10-11, entry 144, RG 153, NA. These records in entry 144, RG 153, are a good source of information for conditions in particular POW camps and

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. US POWs from this camp were returned to military control during the period approximately 10-14 May 1945.³⁵ The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 2,395 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag II-A (code 002).

C.3.

Camp. Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde, Brandenburg,

Location. Central Germany, 50 kilometers south of Berlin; 52°10'N- 13°20'E.

Camp population. In early 1945 US personnel consisted of about 1,500 ground forces enlisted men.

Population gains or losses. The POW population grew significantly from February to April 1945 as the Germans marched prisoners from camps further east to Stalag III-A. On 7 February for instance, 5,000 American POWs from Stalag III-B, Furstenburg, virtually the entire population of that camp, arrived at Luckenwalde. Because of this influx, the number of POWs reported at Stalag III-A varied considerably depending on the source and the date reported; for example: MIS-X War Department, 17 March 2,890 US; 69th Infantry Division, 2 May 5,500 US, 3,600 UK, 4,000+ other nationalities; Ninth Army G-1, 5-6 May 5,000 US; Wing Commander Collard, 7 May 16,000 total; Captain Gay, 11 May 4,500 US, 4,200 UK, 1,200 other nationalities; Staff Sergeant Gasperich, 9 June 5,000 US, 6,000 UK.

Circumstances of liberation. On 22 April 1945, the Red Army, probably troops of the 4th Guards Tank Army from the 1st Belorussian Front, arrived at Luckenwalde. But liberation for the Allied POWs was by no means immediate; for most of the Americans in the camp it eventually came despite, not because of, Soviet efforts. From 22 April until 20 May, when the Soviets agreed to the formal

usually include some information about who liberated the camp and when. There are separate files for each of the principal camps.

³⁵ SHAEF to 30 Mission for Deane and Archer, 23 April 1945, Message FWD-19796, SHAEF SGS Decimal File, "383.6," box 88, entry 1, RG 331. Bomber Command Advance to HQ Bomber Command, 24 April 1945, Message BCA.118; CG Ninth Army to SHAEF FWD, 10 May 1945, Message KX-21203; SHAEF Main to CG Ninth Army, 13 May 1945, Message S-87885; CG Ninth

evacuation of the camp, Soviet troops, on several occasions, reportedly used force to keep Allied prisoners in Stalag III-A. As Wing Commander R.C.M. Collard, the Senior Allied Officer, put it to the Russian officer purportedly responsible for the repatriation: "... we have had to continue to all intents and purposes as prisoners." The Russian commander would not allow evacuation until he received specific orders from Moscow. On at least four occasions between 6 and 8 May, the Soviets turned away American truck convoys, dispatched from the US Ninth Army zone west of the Elbe, to evacuate prisoners.

Despite Soviet resistance, nearly all of the US POWs, as well as many of the British, evacuated themselves during this period. They simply walked away from the camp and, on their own initiative, made their way to Allied lines, about 25 miles to the west. During the period 5 to 7 May, about 5,000 US POWs from Luckenwalde arrived in the Ninth Army zone; their evacuation from Germany was arranged through Airfield 16 at Hildesheim. When the Soviets finally agreed to formal evacuation on 20 May, less than 200 American prisoners remained in the camp.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 1,115 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag III-A (code 062).

The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 3,873 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag III-B, Furstenburg (code 004); these too, logically, were in fact liberated from Luckenwalde since all of III-B had been evacuated to III-A on 7 February 1945.³⁶

Army to SHAEF MAIN, 14 May 1945, Message KX-21400, SHAEF SGS Decimal File, "383.6-7," box 87, entry 1, RG 331, NA.

³⁶ 69 INF DIV to SHAEF, 2 May 1945, Message X52/02; "Report of Wing Commander R.C.M. Collard, RAF, to Russian Commandant for Repatriation at Stalag III-A," 7 May 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "254," box 13, entry 6, RG 331, NA. ETO Provost Marshal Section, "Nominal Rolls of American POWs-Hildesheim," box 1, RG 332; other rosters of POWs from III-A are included in PWIB Subject File, "ETO Letters, May-June 1945," boxes 2182A-2183, entry 460A, RG 389, NA. Capt. Lawrence S. Cruickshank to CO 6801st MIS-X Detachment, 9 June 1945, ETO MIS-X, Decimal Correspondence, "383.6-Reports on E & E and RAMPs," box 8, RG 332, NA. Statement of

C.4.

Camp. Stalag IV-D, Torgau

Location. On the Elbe, northeast of Leipzig; 51°32'N- 13°0'E.

Camp population. Included about 300 US prisoners, most in work detachments, including doing factory work in nearby Halle.

Circumstances of liberation. The significance of this camp is that it was on the Elbe, near the meeting point of the Soviet and American armies. The US 69th Division, the first American unit to make contact with the Soviets, liberated Stalag IV-D on or about April 25, 1945. SHAEF had ordered the division commander to make arrangements with Soviet authorities for transfers of prisoners based on local conditions. The 5th Guards Army, which eventually occupied the area containing Stalag IV-D, controlled Soviet forces in this area.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 367 names of US prisoners of war

SSgt. Joseph C. Gasperich (US Man of Confidence at III-A), nd.; Capt. S. Hamilton Gay (SHAEF G-2 officer at RAMP Camp No. 8) to Maj. P.S. MacCallum (SHAEF G-2), IS9/R8/GHQ21 11 May 1945; IS9/R8/GHQ24, 12 May 1945; IS9/R8/GHQ32, May 18, 1945, ETO MIS-X, Decimal Correspondence, "383.6-POWs(Allied)," box 9, RG 332, NA [series of reports on conditions at III-A and gradual evacuation by Americans]. Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, November 1, 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany" [p. 73 on Furstenburg evacuation]; War Department MIS-X, "German POW Camps W/American POWs, 17 March 1945, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2239, entry 460A, RG 389, NA. G-1 Ninth Army After Action Report (1-15 May 1945), G-1 Diary (5-6 May 1945), Ninth Army 109-11.4, World War II Operations Reports, box 2903, RG 407, NA. EX Report No. 645, 18 May 1945, "Col. John H. Van Vliet, Jr. (Stalag III-A);" EX Report No. 673, 5 July 1945, "SSgt. Joseph C. Gasperich (Stalag III-A);" EX Report No. 679, 2 July 1945, "Capt. Lewis R. Meiserhelter, Jr. (Stalag III-A)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA.

A detailed account providing essential information on how the US POWs freed themselves from the Soviets at Stalag III-A is in Clarence R. Meltesen, Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64 (San Francisco: Oflag 64 Press, 1990), pp. 284-302 and 349-68.

who were returned to military control from Stalag IV-D (code 095).³⁷

³⁷ MIS-X, WDGS, "German POW Camps With American PWs," 1 February 1945, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2239, entry 460A, RG 389, NA. CG Vth Corps to CG First Army, et al., 25 April 1945, Message R-7248, 12th Army Group Adjutant General Decimal File, "255-POW Camps, Vol.III," box 86, entry 198, RG 331. SHAEF to CG 69th Div., 4 May 1945, Message S-89987, SHAEF SGS Decimal File, "383.6-7," box 87, entry 1, RG 331, NA. EX Report No. 680, 24 July 1945, "Sgt. David T. Colin (Torgau, Germany)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA. File 100-406, JAG War Crimes Branch, box 14, entry 144, RG 153, NA.

C.5.

Camp. Stalag XVII-B, Gneixendorf, Austria

Location. 6 kilometers northwest of Krems; 48°27'N-15°39'E.

Camp population. The US prisoner population was mostly Army Air Forces enlisted men.

Population gains or losses. In the last weeks of the war the number of US POWs grew to over 4,200 as evacuees from other camps swelled its ranks. The entire camp approached nearly 30,000 POWs of various nationalities.

Circumstances of liberation. On 8 April 1945, about 4,000 able-bodied US POWs from XVII-B began an 18-day, 280-mile march under German guard to Braunau, Austria (on the Austrian-German border about 70 miles east of Munich).³⁸ Some 200 sick POWs remained behind in the camp hospital; on 9 May Soviet troops (likely from the 4th Guards Army, 2nd Ukrainian Front) overran Krems and liberated these men. Meanwhile, about 75 other Americans had escaped from the march columns and returned to XVII-B, also to be eventually liberated by the Soviets. Their treatment, while briefly in Red Army custody, was reported to have been "good."

On 3 May 1945, troops from the US 13th Armored Division, Third Army, arrived at the prison camp north of Braunau to which the American POWs from Stalag XVII-B had been moved. American and Soviet troops also liberated some POWs originally from Gneixendorf, who had escaped from the march columns headed to Braunau.

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 2,983 names of US prisoners of war who were returned to military control from Stalag XVII-B (code 025).³⁹

³⁸ Greg Hatton, Stories My Father Never Told Me: The Journal of the "San Antone Rose" (Brooklyn: Greg Hatton, 1993), pp. 85-89, plus one page of maps and three pages of photographs, relate to the march from XVII-B to Braunau.

³⁹ Military Intelligence Service, WDGS, 1 November 1945, "American Prisoners of War in Germany", pp. 100-08, Subject File POW Information Bureau, box 2197, entry 460A, RG 389. ETO

C.6.

Camp. Stalag IV-B, Muhlberg, Saxony

Location. On the Elbe River, 18 kilometers north-northwest of Riesa, in the Dresden district; 51°26'N-13°13'E.

Camp population. By early 1945 this camp included over 5,000 ground forces enlisted men.

Population gains or losses. This camp grew significantly after December 1944, in the wake of the Battle of the Bulge; evacuees from the east also added to its population in the period leading up to liberation in late April 1945.

Circumstances of liberation. Soviet forces, probably 5th Guards Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front, reached the vicinity of Muhlberg on 23 April 1945. Most of the American POWs at this camp remained under Russian control until 4 May, when evacuated by the US 69th Division.⁴⁰ Despite the general link-up on 25 April between US troops and the Soviets in this immediate area, some of the British and US POWs remained in Soviet hands as late as mid-May. Others had escaped to American control beyond the Elbe soon after the Russians arrived. For those who remained in Russian custody, conditions and morale were reported as "bad."

Accounting of US POWs & other remaining questions. The Veterans Administration list prepared from the Prisoner of War Information Bureau IBM cards contains 7,614 names of US prisoners of war

MIS-X Interviews with SSgts. Kenneth Kurterbach and Jos. A. Dillard, 29 May 1945, ETO MIS-X, Decimal Correspondence, "383.6-POWs(Allied)," box 9, RG 332. SSgt. Isaac Abeyta, 5 September 1945; TSgt. Richard Tuttle, 16 September 1945; TSgt. George P. Smith, 14 August 1945, "Statement or Report Of Interview Of Recovered Personnel," AGO Classified Decimal File, 1943-45, "383.6 (18 September 1945) and (31 August 1945)", box 2438, entry 360, RG 407, NA. EX Report No. 661, 5 June 1945, "SSgt. Kenneth J. Kurtenbach (Stalag XVII-B)," CPM Branch, WDGS MIS-X, "Interrogations," Subject File, Prisoner of War Information Branch, box 2006, Entry 460A, RG 389, NA.

⁴⁰ File 100-423, JAG War Crimes Branch, boxes 32-33, entry 144, RG 153, NA, contains accounts of POWs from IV-B; see particularly 100-423-79, testimony of Pvt. Howard T. Kennedy (37490643) on liberation by the Russians.

who were returned to military control from Stalag IV-B (code 006).⁴¹

⁴¹ CG 69th Division to SHAEF, 1 May 1945, Message FS-IN-379; CG NINTH ARMY to SHAEF, 17 May 1945, Message KX-21617, SHAEF SGS Decimal File, "383.6/7," box 8, entry 1, RG 331, NA. SHAEF G-1 to PWX, 18 May 1945, SHAEF G-1 Decimal File, "383.6," box 25, entry 6, RG 331, NA.

